gives nitrogenous value to the soil. The subterranean channel rises to the surface in the middle of the plantation, where it is collected in a large cement reservoir; from this source the water, carefully controlled in volume, is conveyed by pipes and runnels into narrow ducts constructed at right-angles to the paths. Palm trees are very thirsty and require plenty of water in the hot weather.

A single *Askhari* guarded the plantation, which was noisy with the chatter of brilliantly-plumed birds; for our amusement he climbed a tall palm with the agility of a monkey, using a rope-sling as a support, and dexterously cut a bunch of male flowers for our inspection. The flowers, which have a sickly sweet smell, are tightly packed in a tough protective sheath; these sheaths are sold, when ripe, and used to pollinate the female palms. They are also edible, being very palatable when boiled and eaten with butter sauce. When, a few months later, I passed through Djaidh, the green dates were already forming, and labourers were high in the trees, tying veils of muslin around them to protect them from insects. The dates which are intended for export are gathered when they are light brown, that is, half-ripe, and are often packed with the stalk attached. The Arabs usually prefer them fully ripe, when the colour is dark brown; over-ripe dates are used for the manufacture of syrup which, when crystallized, makes a good brown sugar. Hives are often kept in the vicinity of the plantations and the air was full of their buzzing as we passed through the glades.

Before we reached the encampment we passed the ruins of an old fort. Nothing but the outer shell remained and the gateway had long since lost its magnificent doors; the walls were of rose-pink clay and mortar, and the crumbling tower was crenellated like the ramparts of a mediæval French castle. Sheikh Hamid told us that the fort originally belonged to his grandfather, Sheikh of Kalba, who at one time included Djaidh among his possessions; but a succession of tribal wars had decreased the influence of the Kalba clan and Djaidh had degenerated into neutral ground.

The road to the encampment was a mere body-wide track through tall grass, so high in places that we could not see ahead. Presently two little Arab boys, leading an emaciated bull, greeted us as the truck emerged from this forest and entered a wide, muddy river bed. Here we saw the first of the wells. A gang of labourers was busily letting down baskets into the main channel, while the tribesmen looked on. The headman, a fine-looking old Arab